

The decision by Sinclair Broadcasting to force their stations, a total of 64, to air an anti-Kerry documentary days before the election is a clear attempt to influence the political direction of this country. The purpose of broadcast networks are to inform and not influence.

In a free society, the public airwaves are owned by everyone, even those of divergent views, whose beliefs lie outside the mainstream. Media use of public airwaves must come with an obligation to serve the public interest, by providing accuracy in information without any attempt to influence.

Because of the possible temptation to use the media as a means to control and to influence the flow of information, for a purpose other than for the public good, this freedom must be legally regulated.

When large companies consolidate the possibility of "group thought" increases. Large companies have "special" interest and public information must not be shaped to fit those interests. When that happens we are all losers. What defines us as Americans is the freedom of thought and the pursuit of truth. I grew up believing the media to be the guardian of this fundamental American right. The Free Press kept us free. Left unchecked the media may become part of the problem. Sinclair's actions show why we need to strengthen media ownership rules, not weaken them. They show why the license renewal process needs to involve more than a returned postcard. Thank you.